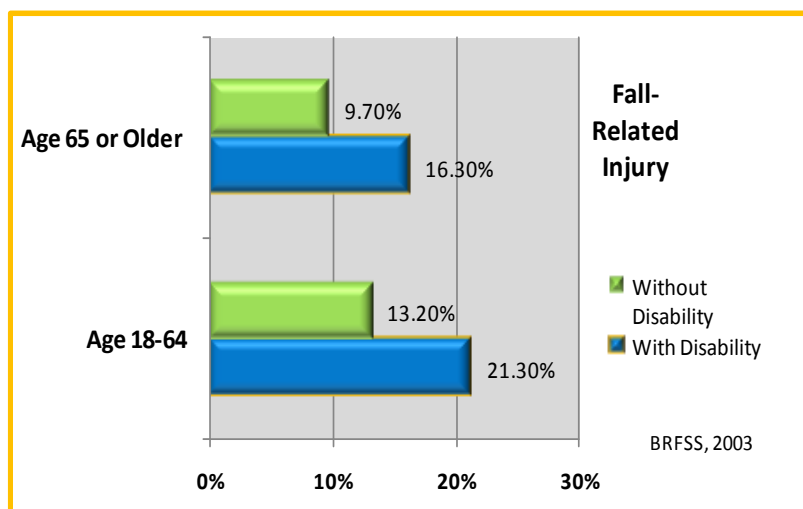


## Slips, Trips, & Slides—Don't Fall For It! Fall Awareness and Prevention

Approximately 8,000 children are treated daily in U.S. emergency rooms for fall-related injuries. According to the Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), falls are the leading cause of non-fatal injuries for children ages 0-19. Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of deaths, nonfatal injuries, and hospital admissions for trauma. The ND Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) indicates that adults with disabilities are more likely than adults without disabilities to have a recent fall-related injury (Muus, 2009).

Twenty to thirty percent of people who fall suffer moderate to severe injuries such as bruises, hip fractures, or head traumas. These injuries can make it hard to get around and limit independent living. Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries. The most common fractures caused by falls are of the spine, hip, forearm, leg, ankle, pelvis, upper arm, and hand. Many people who fall, even those who are not injured, develop a fear of falling. This fear may cause them to limit their activities, leading to reduced mobility and physical fitness, and increased risk for falls.



### Common Risk Factors that Lead to Falls

- Vision and hearing problems.
- Certain medications used to treat hypertension, heart disease, allergy, insomnia, stomach acidity, and depression.
- Taking multiple medications.
- Lack of physical activity.
- Difficulty walking, foot problems, or issues with balance, coordination, or muscle weakness.
- Certain diseases or conditions such as joint disease, heart disease, stroke, or Parkinsons.

- Confusion from dementia, delirium, or depression.
- Alcohol or drug abuse.
- Fall hazards in the home.

## Tips to Prevent Falls

- Have vision and hearing checked regularly by a professional. Wear glasses and hearing aids if needed.
- Use medication only as directed and be aware of side effects.
- Wear shoes that fit well and are comfortable with nonslip bottoms.
- Use contrasting colors on handrails and stairs, and non-slip surfaces. Install railings in hallways and grab bars in bathroom and shower.
- Arrange furniture so that it allows plenty of room to pass through with assistive aids or devices.
- Check for adequate lighting throughout home or work environment. Have a nightlight in place for getting out of bed at night.
- Remove throw rugs or secure them firmly to the floor.
- Stay active to maintain overall strength and endurance.
- Know limitations, do not risk a fall by trying a task that cannot be completed with ease. Consider a fall alert system for those at high risk.

Falls can have serious outcomes; they can make the difference between being healthy or unhealthy and being dependent or independent. Implementing prevention practices can decrease the risk of falls.



### Sources:

- CDC @ <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Falls/adultfalls.html>
- Aging & Disability Services Admin @ <http://www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov/publinfo/falls>
- Muus, K. 2009, Health-related attributes of adults with disabilities: Analysis of 2001-2007 BRFSS data.



Health-related information provided in this fact sheet is for informational purposes only and should not replace advice from a medical professional. The ND Disability Health Project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through a grant (1 u59 DD000278-01) to the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities at Minot State University. Opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the CDC.

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## Vision:

All people in ND have access to information and services they need to maintain good health and wellness. There are no health disparities between people with and without disabilities that are based solely on the presence of a disability.

## Pay It Forward.....

Pass it on to others who may find this information helpful.